

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MAY 2, 2012

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** ABI LERNER, P.E. DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

**SUBJECT:** AGENDA ITEM #4 - DEL RAY PARKING STUDY

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a report on the Del Ray Parking Study.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Transportation Commission (Commission) receives the report on the Del Ray Parking Study.

**DISCUSSION:** In order to continue to support Del Ray's business owners and residents, the City has undertaken an evaluation of the parking supply to understand current conditions and ultimately develop strategies and implement measures to better manage parking within the area, especially along and immediately adjacent to Mount Vernon Avenue. Several studies have been performed in 2002, 2003 and 2005 for the Del Ray neighborhood. The current study was performed to update the previous studies and to document existing public parking conditions in Del Ray, compare to the previous parking studies, and to develop parking recommendations to best manage the parking supply.

**Study Area:** The study area consisted of approximately 30 city blocks and is bordered by Commonwealth Avenue to the north, East Glendale Avenue to the south, and one block to both the east and west of Mount Vernon Avenue (See Attachment 1).

**Community Input:** Initially, before the Del Ray Parking Study started staff met with a group of citizen and business representatives to ensure that the study reflected the concerns of the neighborhood stakeholders. In addition, City staff has met with a small group of business and citizen representatives separately at key stages of the Del Ray Parking Study. In October 2010, staff presented the findings generally, explaining that they were similar to the findings in the 2004 study. In March 2011 City staff shared the draft short term recommendations for managing on-street parking and loading. Throughout the meetings, a series of issues such as parking meters, parking requirements, enforcement, signage, shared parking, pedestrian safety and residential parking permits were discussed as issues for the community.

**Data Collection:** The data collected included parking inventory, utilization, and turnover in the study area, both along Mount Vernon Avenue and in the residential sections east and west of the corridor. On-street and off-street parking occupancy and inventory counts were collected on a

weekday and a weekend in June 2010 between the hours of 12:00 to 2:00 PM and 6:00 to 8:00 PM. In addition, parking turnover surveys were also conducted in June and November 2010.

**Findings:** Analysis of utilization and turnover data revealed the following findings:

Parking Inventory:

On-street: The field inventory revealed that there are approximately 1,099 on-street parking spaces in the study area of which 25% are located along Mt Vernon Ave and the rest (75%) are located on side-streets.

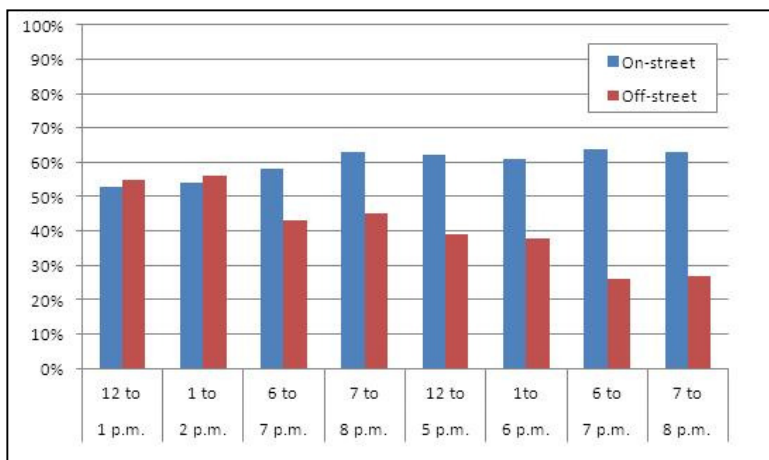
Off-Street: There are 810 off-street parking spaces in the Del Ray Neighborhood study area out of which only two surface parking lots are specifically designated for public use. Public parking lots make up for 2% of the off-street supply. Eight other lots (~28% of the off-street supply) are “shared” and designated as both public and private lots. The majority of the surface parking lots which account for 70% of the off-street supply in the Del Ray Neighborhood are private and not open for public use.

Peak Parking Utilization:

On-street: The parking utilization analysis revealed that system-wide on-street parking utilization was between 53 percent and 64 percent, indicating that on-street parking is available in the study area, however, there are some certain times of the day that some blocks approach capacity. There were high demand areas with utilization that exceeded 85 percent along the Mount Vernon corridor north of Bellefonte Avenue.

Off-Street: The overall off-street parking utilizations in both public and private/public lots ranged from 26 percent to 56 percent, indicating that off-street parking is also available throughout the study area if all available spaces were open to general public regardless of their trip purpose.

The chart below illustrates on- and off-street parking occupancy in the study area during the weekday and weekend peak hours.



On- and Off-street Overall Parking Utilization

Parking turnover: The analysis concluded that vehicles, on average, were parked less than the two hour time limit. However, there were a handful of vehicles that were parked for durations longer than the two-hour limit.

Loading Zones: Observations from existing conditions analysis indicated that there is a need for a better management of loading zones that serve neighborhood businesses. Since the utilization peaks at Noon and in the evening, early morning (7-9am) and late evening (after 9pm) should be designated as delivery hours. However, caution should be made with designating late night loading hours as they can have adverse impacts on businesses with evening peaks (e.g. restaurants and bars).

The general findings of the study were that the Mount Vernon Avenue corridor and surrounding streets do not have a system-wide parking problem. However, there are certain times of the day where some blocks such as sections of Mount Vernon Avenue between Howell and Oxford approach capacity. In addition, this deficiency creates the potential for spillover problems onto adjacent streets.

## **Recommendations:**

### Short Term Recommendations

- Add general parking with a two-hour time limit along the northwest corner of Mount Vernon Avenue and Windsor Avenue.
- Implement additional loading zones to support local business at various locations along Mount Vernon Avenue.
- Create Customer Convenience Zones, which are intended to be short-term, high-turnover spaces to serve businesses with quick turnaround transactions. These spaces could be utilized as loading zone parking, especially in the morning hours, before peak parking demand begins to occur.
- Implement residential permit zones in areas where parking utilization data dictates additional parking restrictions.
- Remove some taxi stands to add general parking.
- Consistent Enforcement of Two-Hour Limits as it is the only tool in place to assure the proper turnover and utilization of parking spaces

### Mid-Long Term Recommendations

- **Shared Parking:** Shared parking agreements can be facilitated with private business and property owners whose parking lots are underutilized in the evening peaks when the on-street utilization peaks along Mt Vernon Avenue. The study recommended a series of steps that should be taken to implement a shared parking program for Del Ray:

*1. Identify groups of business and property owners who would benefit from the use of shared parking:* Based on the capacity and utilization data analyses, the Study provided specific location recommendations and identified several locations where this type of arrangement could exist.

*2. Modify zoning codes and ordinances that restrict shared parking:* It was recommended that the City re-evaluate the current parking requirements in the

Zoning Ordinance that restrict or prohibit shared parking arrangements today. One primary example is the current SUP restrictions in place, which are a major hurdle to a shared parking system. The City should remove or restructure language such as this to make the move to a shared parking system easier to implement and manage.

- **Paid Parking:** The Study recommended that paid parking be introduced once on-street occupancy is above 85 percent and the adjacent surface lots are reaching their threshold occupancy.
- **Signage, Wayfinding, and Branding:** It was recommended that it would be beneficial for the City to implement the wayfinding program in the Del Ray neighborhood to direct visitors to public and shared parking areas, and to identify primary destinations.
- **Provision of Short-Term Parking:** Most of the parking along Mount Vernon Avenue is designated as two-hour parking. In some locations (dry cleaners, coffee shops, post office) shorter term parking spaces will promote turnover and more availability for patrons of these uses to “run-in and run-out”.
- **Parking Requirements:** the Study recommended that The City should consider removing parking requirements for new businesses (or redevelopment along the corridor) under certain threshold levels (e.g., less than 5,000 square-feet). This approach is similar to existing parking requirements in Old Town and would stimulate business in the smaller parcels, while still requiring sufficient parking for larger new development. This could potentially assist with the move to a shared parking program throughout the area (e.g. opening up the Sun Trust Bank and Salvation Army parking lots).

In addition to the above, the study also included the following recommendations that staff does *not* support at this time.

- **Dedicated Parking Enforcement:** To better enforce existing and proposed regulations along the Mount Vernon corridor and Del Ray neighborhood, it was recommended that the City assign parking enforcement officers to the Del Ray neighborhood who will serve two-fold as an enforcement officer and neighborhood ambassador. Due to the size of the study area and general compliance with the two-hour parking limit, there is not enough justification to assign a full-time enforcement officer to the Del Ray neighborhood at this time.
- **Funding Parking Improvements:**
  - Establish an Enterprise Fund: enterprise funds can allow or require ‘in-lieu’ parking fees from developers to fund improvements to or expansion of parking facilities. By establishing an enterprise fund, the City will create the mechanism necessary to store, manage, and distribute funds collected from both in-lieu fees and parking revenues to the construction, operation, and maintenance of parking facilities or infrastructure. The enterprise fund should be designated for use in the Mount Vernon Avenue and Del Ray neighborhood areas only.
  - Collect Revenue for Parking: implementing paid parking along Mount Vernon Avenue will provide an additional revenue stream to fund improvements. After improvements are funded, additional revenue should be reinvested in the Del Ray Neighborhood district.
  - Additional Revenue from Enforcement: enhanced enforcement should lead to the collection of additional revenue from tickets. However, the City should take a customer service approach to enforcement, with first time offenders treated easier than habitual offenders (i.e. graduated fine structures).

Staff believes that these recommendations should be explored Citywide and are not recommended at this time for Del Ray.

Staff will present the study before City Council on May 22, 2012 with a recommendation to develop an implementation plan. Subsequently staff will incorporate Council guidance and evaluate and prioritize recommendations set forth in the study and create an implementation work group to implement recommendations from the study.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1- Study Area Boundaries